

B. Claims

Please cancel claims 4, 5, 12 and 13 without prejudice and amend claims 1, 10 and 14-17 as follows. A complete listing of all the claims appears below; this listing replaces all earlier amendments and listings of the claims.

1. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a liquid composition of N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- α -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a liquid carrier ~~selected from the group consisting of (1) water and an alcohol and~~ (2) water and a suspending agent selected from the group consisting of carboxymethyl cellulose, algin, gum arabic, carrageenan, xanthan gum, guar gum, tragacanth, hydroxypropyl methyl cellulose, methylcellulose, pectin, locust bean gum, sodium alginate, propylene glycol alginate, caramel and mixtures thereof; and

(b) mixing N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- α -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester with said liquid carrier in a ratio of up to 3:2 to produce a liquid composition;

wherein the N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- α -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester is mixed until fully dissolved or suspended.

2. - 9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the ~~liquid carrier is water and a suspending agent, and the~~ suspending agent is selected from the group consisting carboxymethyl cellulose, carrageenan, xanthan gum or tragacanth.

11. - 13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 ~~or 12~~, wherein the suspending agent may be effectively incorporated in the liquid composition in amounts of from 0.001% to about 0.5% of the total weight of the composition.

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein neotame is present in an amount of 1% to 70% by weight of the ~~total-suspension~~ liquid composition.

16. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein neotame is present in an amount of 20% to 55% by weight of the ~~total-suspension~~ liquid composition.

17. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 16, wherein neotame is present in an amount of 20% to 35% by weight of the ~~total-suspension~~ liquid composition.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- α -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester is mixed with said liquid carrier at a temperature in the range of about -20°C to about 30°C.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 18, wherein the N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- α -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester is mixed with said liquid carrier at a temperature in the range of about -10°C to about 10°C.

20. (Original) The liquid composition produced according to the method of claim 1.

21. (Original) A food or beverage product sweetened by the composition of claim 20.

22. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a liquid composition of N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- α -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester comprising the step of:

mixing 30% by weight of N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- α -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester with water as a liquid carrier;

wherein the N-[N-(3,3-dimethylbutyl)-L- α -aspartyl]-L-phenylalanine 1-methyl ester is mixed until fully dissolved or suspended.